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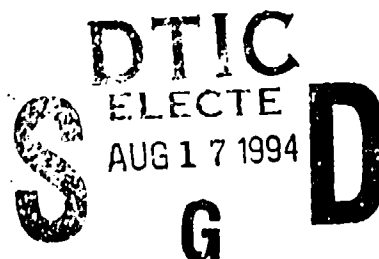


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

THE RED RIVER CAMPAIGN OF 1864

by

Donald T. Wynn
COL, U.S. ARMY



A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

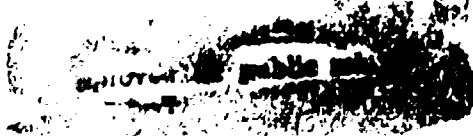
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Signature: Donald T. Wynn

17 June 1994

Paper directed by Captain D. Watson
Chairman, Department of Joint Military Operation.

Approved by:



Faculty Research Advisor Date

2128
94-25900



94 8 16 08 8

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3 DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.	
2b DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO	PROJECT NO
		TASK NO	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) THE RED RIVER CAMPAIGN OF 1864 (2)			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) WYNN, DONALD TIMOTHY, COLONEL, US ARMY			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 17 JUNE 1994	15 PAGE COUNT 20
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17 COSATI CODES		18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	CIVIL WAR, OPERATIONS, RED RIVER,	
		MG N.P. BANKS, MG RICHARD TAYLOR, SHREVEPORT	
		UNION, CONFEDERATE, RIVERINE, JOINT,	
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) THE UNION'S RED RIVER OPERATIONS DURING THE SPRING OF 1864 ARE ANALYZED IN THE CONTEXT OF OPERATIONAL DOCTRINE AND THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR. THE MOVEMENTS OF BOTH UNION AND CONFEDERATE FORCES ARE DESCRIBED AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL. TACTICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE VARIOUS BATTLES AND ENGAGEMENTS ARE DETAILED ONLY TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO DESCRIBE THE OPERATIONAL MOVEMENTS. MAJOR GENERAL HALLECK OF THE UNION ARMY CONFIGURED A FATALLY FLAWED OPERATION ON THE RED RIVER TO SEIZE SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA. MAJOR GENERAL BANKS EXECUTED THAT OPERATION WITH TOTAL DISREGARD FOR AT LEAST SEVEN OF THE U.S. ARMY'S NINE PRINCIPLES OF WAR. THE COMBINATION OF FLAWED OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DISREGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR ALLOWED AN OVERWHELMINGLY SUPERIOR UNION FORCE TO BE DEFEATED.			
20 DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <i>Unclassified</i>	
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL HAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c OFFICE SYMBOL C

Abstract of
THE RED RIVER OPERATION OF 1864

The Union's Red River Operations during the spring of 1864 are analyzed in the context of operational doctrine and the principles of war. The movements of both Union and Confederate forces are described at the operational level. Tactical descriptions of the various battles and engagements are detailed only to the extent necessary to describe the operational movements. Major General Halleck of the Union Army configured a fatally flawed operation on the Red River to seize Shreveport, Louisiana. Major General Banks executed that operation with total disregard for at least seven of the U.S. Army's nine principles of war. The combination of flawed operational considerations and disregard for the principles of war allowed an overwhelmingly superior Union force to be defeated.

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INTRODUCTION

The American Civil War saw many examples of 'joint' operations. The riverine operations executed by the Union Army and the Union Navy in the Western Theater are perhaps the most well known and successful of these operations. The names Ft. Donaldson, Ft. Henry, Island #10, and Vicksburg evoke not only the picture of armies moving and fighting but also of ironclad gunboats fighting their way past batteries and providing swift, reliable transportation to the Union armies. Even the most casual student of the Civil War is aware of the crucial partnership which existed between MG Ulysses Grant and ADM David Porter in the daring operations around Vicksburg. Only through their united efforts, was the Union to finally capture the "Gibraltar of the West". Unfortunately, it is the sad truth that most military officers learn far more from defeat than they do from victory. In victory, the wrong lessons are too often enshrined as doctrine and the potential pitfalls are overlooked as inconsequential. In defeat, military officers are forced to examine all aspects of the conflict in an effort to avoid duplicating the mistakes in the future. It is, therefore, far more instructive for students of military history to study a failed operation (such as Anzio) than it is for them to study a classic success (such as Midway). The Red River Operation of 1864 shows an almost unique combination of failed operational planning by the Union high command coupled with a total disregard for the principles of war by the Union field commander. Together, they snatched defeat from the jaws of victory and very likely prolonged the Civil War for several months.

BACKGROUND

The Red River Operation took place in the early spring of 1864, but its genesis was many years before in the bitter years leading up to the Civil War. In 1857, Fred Olmsted noted in his A Journey Through Texas that the anti-slavery German minority of western Texas was raising cotton successfully without the use of slaves. Here, he indicated, was an excellent opportunity for 'free soilers' to save Texas from the 'blight of slavery'.¹ Massive immigration into the state of Texas could turn that slave state into a free state. The idea took root in the North particularly in northeast. It became widely believed that Texas was ready to be transformed into a cotton producing free state with the immigration of a suitable number of abolitionists. The idea was sustained and encouraged by the publication of a "...pamphlet entitled 'Cheap Cotton by Free Labor'." by Edward Atkinson.² As a result of these, other publications, and a legion of public speakers, the politicians of the northeast were firmly fixed on the ideas of Texas and cotton.

The outbreak of the Civil War inevitably impacted the cotton exports to northern mills. By June of 1862, "...3,252,000 of 4,745,750 spindles were motionless."³ This had an enormous impact on the economy of the region. Even the seizure of New Orleans did not produce significant sources of cotton. Desperately, politicians turned to a known potential source of cotton, Texas, for the solution. A military expedition could easily take Texas and establish a slave free area for the production of cotton. The idea grew quickly as the economic situation in the northeast

¹ Ludwell H. Johnson. Red River Campaign * Politics and Cotton in the Civil War. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1958. P.6.

² ibid. p. 7.

³ ibid. p.13.

deteriorated. Pressure was applied to all levels of the Lincoln administration to support this effort.

Finally, in the fall of 1862, Lincoln's Secretary of War, Stanton, was forced to appoint MG Nathaniel P. Banks "...to organize a Southern expedition."⁴ MG Banks immediately began recruiting an army for the invasion and colonization of Texas. Not surprisingly, Banks found it relatively easy to recruit soldiers for an expedition which promised relatively little fighting and the prospect of lucrative colonization. The expedition set sail on 4 December. Unfortunately, it did not go to Texas.

The administration was firmly convinced of the necessity of opening the Mississippi to commercial traffic and cutting the Confederacy in two. The forces sent to take Vicksburg were not making good progress in the fall and winter of 1862. As a consequence, Banks' force was sent to New Orleans and directed to assist in clearing the Mississippi before undertaking any other operations.⁵ Banks, after some delay, moved from New Orleans to invest Port Hudson, a fortified point on the Mississippi River below Vicksburg. Port Hudson surrendered on 7 July 1863, four days after the surrender of Vicksburg. It might be added that this was in the nick of time as far as Banks was concerned. MG Richard Taylor, CSA, commanding the Trans-Mississippi's Western Louisiana District, was making a determined effort to retake the city of New Orleans. If Vicksburg and Port Hudson had held out for another week, it is very possible that the forces assembled by Taylor could have retaken the city. This would have caused an extremely damaging blow to Union morale, soaring in the wake of the Vicksburg surrender.⁶

⁴ Robert N. Scott, Chief Compiler. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D.C., 1880-1901. Series III, Vol I, p. 833. Cited hereafter as O.R. All references will be Series I unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Johnson, p. 28.

⁶ T. Michael Parrish. Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1992. p. 303.

This did not happen but Richard Taylor demonstrated in that effort the tactical excellence which would make him Banks' nemesis.

About this time, the State Department joined the never ceasing chorus of northeastern politicians lobbying for a Texas operation. State needed to send a signal to the French that further Mexican adventures, particularly with a view to better relations with the Confederacy, would not be tolerated and would be met with force.⁷ The stage was now set for Banks to resume operations against Texas.

MG Halleck favored attacking Texas by way of the Red River but he left the decision up to MG Banks.⁸ Banks felt that the Red River route presented difficult logistical problems and decided to attack Texas by landing near the Sabine Pass and moving overland to the Galveston area (see map of theatre of operations at figure 1). This effort failed when the Union gunboats could not force the entrance into the bay on September 7, 1863. Next, Banks tried an overland movement across south Louisiana to force the Sabine River. This effort, undertaken by MG Franklin and the 19th Corps was too feeble and logistics too difficult for it to carry further than the area of Opelousas.⁹ Banks mounted yet another amphibious operation against the lower Texas coast which was successful on 26 October in raising the Union flag over "...a few acres of barren dunes."¹⁰ Halleck, in the meantime, kept insisting on an expedition up the Red River as the best line of advance for the Union against Texas. Finally, in January 1864, Banks yielded to Halleck's pressure and agreed to an advance up the Red River supported by elements of Sherman's army and, in coordination, with MG Steele's forces in Arkansas.

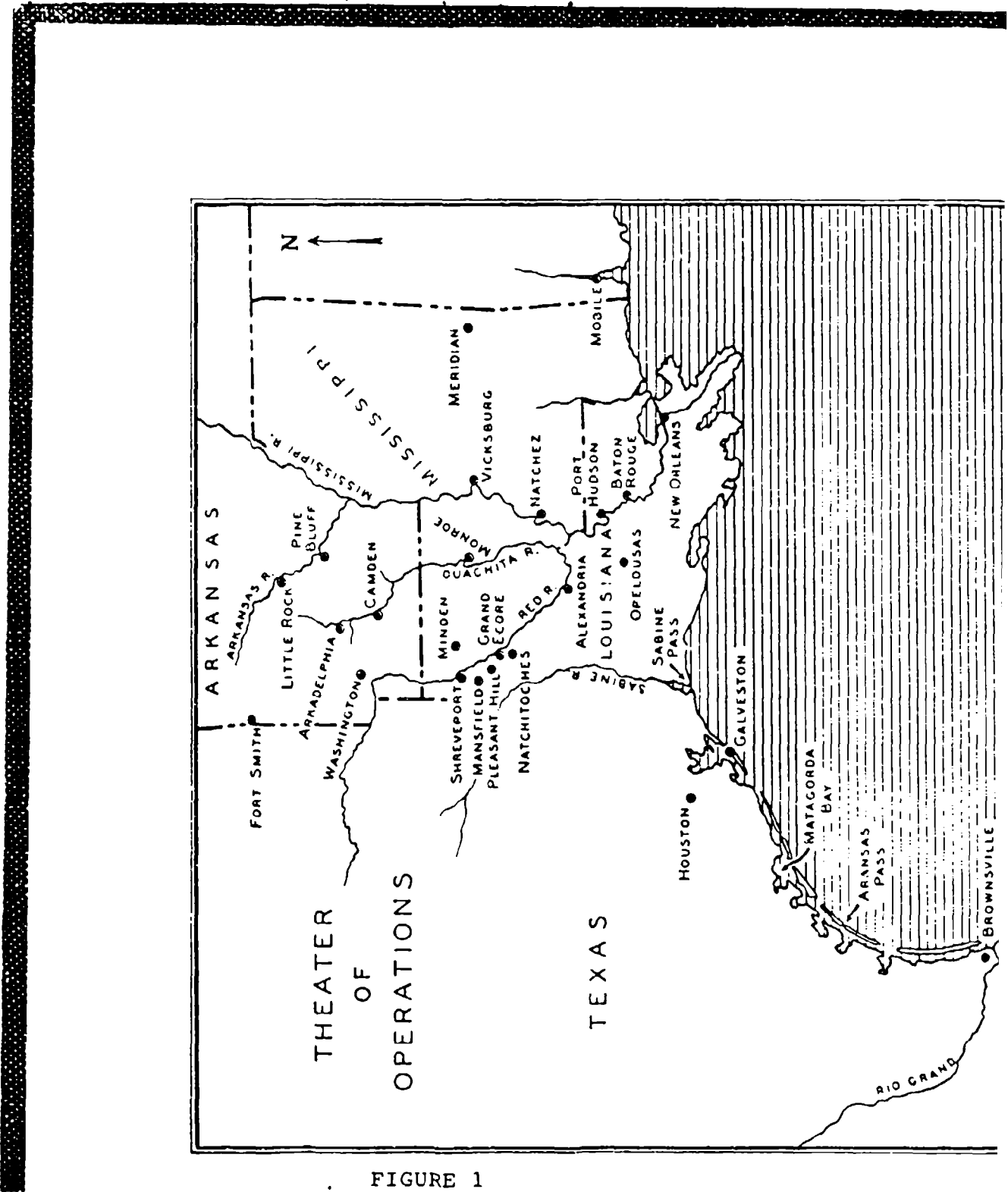
⁷ Johnson, p. 34.

⁸ O.R. Vol XXVI, p. 673.

⁹ Johnson, p. 39.

¹⁰ ibid.

A



THE CAMPAIGN

The original concept of the plan called for four separate commands to cooperate in the seizure of Shreveport. From Halleck's perspective this was to be part of the overall 1864 Grand Strategy. Four principle Southern cities were targeted for capture: Richmond, by Meade under Grant; Atlanta by Sherman; Mobile and Shreveport by Banks. The combination of these blows would leave the South incapable of prosecuting the war. The capture of Shreveport was by itself not critical to the war effort but it would be a useful victory for the administration to placate the Northeastern politicians who were still clamoring for cotton from the South to feed their hungry mills. It would also allow the Lincoln administration to form a pro-Union state government in Louisiana in time for the elections.

In order to seize Shreveport, Banks would be given the use of ADM David Porter's excellent riverine fleet. Porter would be enjoined to cooperate with Banks to the fullest. Porter was amenable to the idea as his fleet was not committed anywhere else. Banks would be reinforced by a portion of Sherman's army for the operation and, Steele would be directed to move his forces from the District of Arkansas, headquartered at Little Rock, against Shreveport in a southwesterly direction. Banks, Sherman, Porter, and Steele would all be required to cooperate totally in order to execute this plan but, unfortunately, that was not going to happen. MG Steele commanded the Department of the Arkansas and was, nominally, the same rank as MG Banks. Sherman was junior to Banks but was enthusiastic about the operation provided he would be able to lead it. Banks, however, had already made the decision that he would lead the effort in the field rather than delegating it. Porter was Navy. He had cooperated beautifully with Grant and Sherman in taking Vicksburg and now anticipated the same level of competence from Banks. He was to be disappointed.

To give credit to Banks, he recognized his difficulties and pointed them out on several occasions to Halleck but the then General-in-Chief of the armies was not to be dissuaded. While he did not issue orders placing Steele under Banks command, he did enjoin him to cooperate fully. This would have to suffice. Banks pushed this coordination by dispatching his aide up the river to talk candidly to Steele about the coming operation. The aide returned with a preliminary agreement from Steele on a concerted plan of action. Banks was able to coordinate personally with Sherman when he made a trip to New Orleans. Sherman, apparently enthusiastically, agreed to give him the XVth Corps led by BG A.J. Smith, an able veteran of the Western Campaign on the condition Banks return Smith and the XVth Corps not later than 15 April. Sherman's specific guidance issued by the new General-in-Chief of the Union, Ulysses Grant, was determined to minimize the impact of Banks operation on his own actions against Atlanta. Porter indicated he was ready to support whenever Banks gave him the nod but was extremely concerned about the level of the water in the Red River. This concern, voiced by Banks previously to Halleck as a reason not to move up the Red River, was to prove to be critical in the coming months.

The operation began well enough. On 7 March, Banks began moving his forces from Baton Rouge. At the same time, Porter moved up the Red River with the largest fleet of ironclads, tinclads, gunboats, and transports assembled to that date. On board the transports were BG A.J. Smith's XVI Corps. The fleet arrived at Alexandria (see figure 2) on 15 March enroute capturing an incomplete Confederate fort called Fort De Russy along with 11 guns and 200 prisoners.¹¹ Banks, after being delayed by some truly atrocious weather arrived at Alexandria on 23 March. MG Steele, obeying

¹¹ James P. Jones and Edward F. Keuchel, eds. Civil War Marine: A Diary of the Red River Expedition, 1864. Washington, D.C., HQ U.S. Marine Corps, 1975. p. 37.

Extracted from James Russell Soley. Admiral Porter.
New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1913. P. 90.

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Red River Campaign

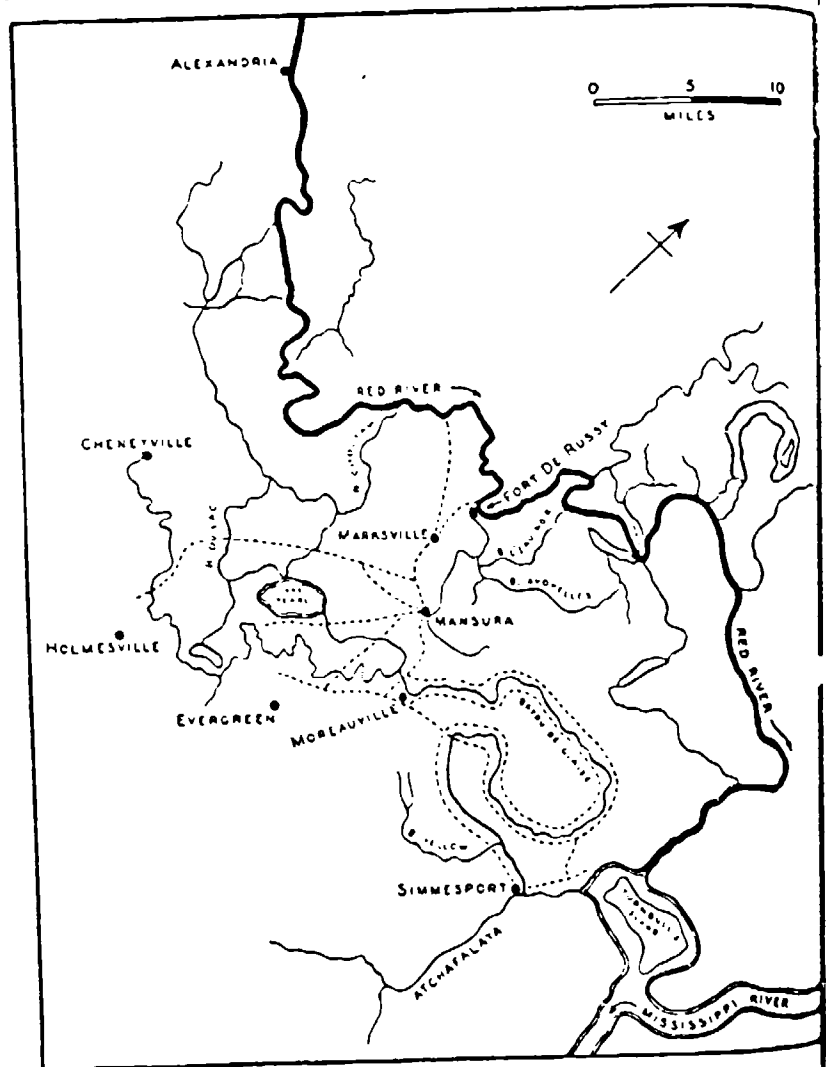


FIGURE 2. Red River between the Mississippi and Alexandria

FIGURE 2

some rather firm orders from the new General of the Armies, Ulysses Grant, moved out from Little Rock on that same date. So far, So good.

After various diversions of attention such as looting of cotton (a task at which the Navy showed remarkable skill and imagination)¹² and organizing elections (it was an election year and Lincoln wanted a Union controlled Louisiana able to vote for him), Banks moved his joint command towards Shreveport. Banks command at this point numbered some "...30,000 effectives of all arms, with 90 guns."¹³ This sizable army was supported by ADM Porter and 60 vessels of all type including 13 ironclads altogether mounting 210 guns.¹⁴ Opposing Banks, MG Richard initially had only two weak divisions and a small division of cavalry, some 7000 troops altogether, but help was on the way. After some prevarication and delay, LTG E. Kirby Smith, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, was moving forces to support Taylor.

Kirby Smith had been trying to decide which of the two columns (Banks or Steele) being mobilized against him he should concentrate against. Initially, he felt he needed to concentrate against Banks and issued order accordingly. However, when he determined the very small size of the forces led by Steele, he hesitated. Would it not be better to concentrate against the weaker opponent and defeat him prior to trying to defeat the numerically superior Banks? Finally, more from indecision than tactical acumen, Kirby Smith let the original movement orders stand and the Trans-Mississippi Department concentrated against Banks. These forces included all the infantry that belonged to MG Price (opposing Union's MG Steele).

From Alexandria, Banks moved north along the Red River supported by ADM Porter and the fleet. Porter had had some difficulty getting his

¹² Johnson, p. 102.

¹³ ibid., p. 100.

¹⁴ ibid.

ironclads through the shallows at Alexandria and had to leave some of them there but the remainder continued on up the Red River.¹⁵ On 3 April at Grand Ecore, a fateful decision was made by Banks. The army sans one division left to guard the fleet moved away from the river on a road going towards Pleasant Hill and Mansfield (see figure 3). Incredibly, Banks seemed to be unaware of a quite acceptable road running along the river straight towards Shreveport. Richard Taylor now reinforced with infantry and Cavalry from Price's command chose that time to strike.¹⁶

At approximately noon on 8 April, as the Federal column approached Mansfield, it suddenly found itself confronted with the Confederate forces drawn up in line of battle. With only 8,000 effectives, it was Taylor's intention to fight a defensive action but, by late afternoon when the Union troops still had not attacked, Taylor ordered an attack.¹⁷ The Union forces caught still deployed in column on the road were driven from the field with heavy losses. Two miles south of the battlefield, Emory's division of the XIX Corps coming late on the scene was able to check the rout. That night the Union army withdrew to positions at Pleasant Hill. The Confederates followed and, though still numerically vastly inferior to the union forces, attacked on the next day with the aim of defeating Banks before he could link back up with the fleet at Grand Ecore. This time the Confederates were repulsed with heavy losses.

At this point, Banks had weathered the worst that the Confederates could throw at him. While not distinguishing himself with his tactical deployments, his army was still intact and able to fight. Banks, however, suffered a crisis in confidence and decided to withdraw to Grand Ecore, there to wait for the fleet which had gone upstream in anticipation of

¹⁵ ibid., p. 108.

¹⁶ ibid., p. 113.

¹⁷ Parrish, p. 344.

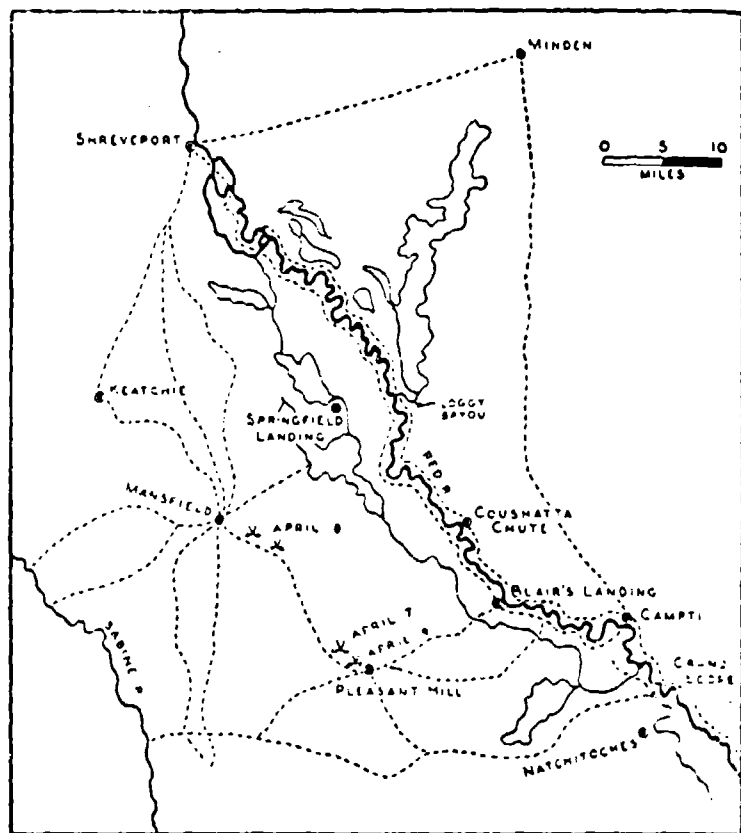


FIGURE 4. Natchitoches to Shreveport

FIGURE 3

meeting him at Loggy Bayou. The initiative had passed to the Confederate command and would never be regained by Banks.

It was now the Confederate Generals turn for a critical decision. Taylor wanted to take the entire force and pursue Banks with the aim of cutting off his withdrawal to Baton Rouge. Kirby Smith, however, remembering Price's outnumbered forces operating against Steele's command, decided to send the infantry to support Price and hopefully cut off Steele from withdrawal to Little Rock.¹⁸

This shifting of forces almost worked. Steel already in critical supply trouble found himself outnumbered and in danger of being cut off. With no little difficulty, he finally managed to extricate his command and get back to Little Rock with a total of 2750 casualties out of an original force of 10,000.¹⁹

Back at the Red River, Banks slowly made his way back down the river harassed by the remaining soldiers of Taylor's command. The river had by now dropped to extremely low levels. At first, it appeared that Porter's entire fleet might be lost when it could not move past the shallows at Alexandria but, thanks to the quick thinking and professional competence of an army engineer, a solution was devised.²⁰ Dams were thrown across the Red River below the shallows. These expedient dams built with anything that the engineers could lay their hands on, were completed in an incredibly short period and allowed the fleet to escape. Banks was able to continue his withdrawal down the river but not unmolested. Taylor tried repeatedly to cut Banks off but was simply too numerically inferior to succeed. On 18 May, the army reached and crossed over the natural barrier of the Atchafalaya Bayou and was safe from anymore pursuit. Bank's command

¹⁸ ibid., p. 370.

¹⁹ Johnson, p. 278.

²⁰ James Russell Soley. Admiral Porter. New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1913. p. 395.

suffered a total of 5400 casualties along with the loss of 9 ships (including three gunboats).²¹ Taylor's command suffered some 4300 casualties.

The real impact of the operation was felt by Sherman's command. A.J. Smith was forced to delay rejoining Sherman's command in order to aid Banks' to cover the withdrawal of his army and the fleet. This left Sherman without the aid of 10,000 battle hardened veterans when he advanced against Atlanta. Even more to the point, Banks' command would now be unable to operate against Mobile for another ten months. As a result, the Confederacy was able to reinforce Johnson with over 15,000 troops "...the large majority of whom would have otherwise have been required to defend Mobile."²² The net result was that the advantage that Sherman had over Johnson was not as great as it might have been and certainly that contributed to a longer and more costly campaign.

²¹ Johnson, p. 278.

²² ibid., p. 279.

ANALYSIS

Even a cursory analysis of the Red River Operation shows that it violated many of the tenets necessary for a successful operation. Banks made many mistakes but it is not fair to lay all the blame on his doorstep. The initial and fundamental concept of the operation came from Halleck.

It is not clear from the record what Halleck was trying to accomplish by an operation up the Red River against Shreveport. Certainly, the Confederates were astounded that any effort at all would be made against the Trans-Mississippi Department.

"I still think that the enemy cannot be so infatuated as to occupy a large force in this department when every man should be employed east of the river, where the result of the campaign this summer must be decisive of our future for our weal or woe.²³"

CSA LTG Kirby Smith to MG Richard Taylor, March 13, 1864.

Kirby Smith was right. Halleck erred in believing the Louisiana area was still critical to the war effort. The center of gravity of the Confederacy lay to the east of the Mississippi. The resources of the Trans-Mississippi were cut off from the rest of the Confederacy by the seizure and opening of the Mississippi River by the Union forces. That Department could contribute nothing more to the Southern effort unless it was the ability to pull Union forces away from other fronts. The Union needed to concentrate its formidable resources against the remaining Southern armies and resources, eliminating the ability of the South to continue the war. The forces in the Trans-Mississippi were simply too weak to be a credible objective.

Halleck might have been trying to gain political capital for Lincoln prior to the 1864 elections. Occupying Louisiana and registering a 'loyal' electorate prepared to support Lincoln in the elections, would be welcome

²³ O.R., Vol XXXIV, Part 1, p. 489.

news to an administration under fire both from radical Republicans and from war weary democrats. There is nothing, however, to indicate that this was Halleck's primary focus or design. On the other hand, occupying Texas for the purpose of exporting 'free' cotton had always been an objective and earnest desire of the northeastern politicians. Was this Halleck's method of placating them? If Texas was indeed the ultimate objective of this maneuver, capturing Shreveport would not bring that objective closer to fulfillment. Indeed, by dissipating the resources necessary for a real operation into Texas, the Red River Operation served to postpone the possibility of occupying Texas.

The most likely explanation is that Halleck was simply trying to use forces in place for a reasonable geographic objective rather than considering whether or not that objective would significantly contribute to the ultimate defeat of the Confederacy. As a consequence, by not concentrating on the Confederacy's center of gravity, Halleck probably prolonged the war by some months.

The second error that Halleck built into this operation was his determination to try to synchronize the movements of two departments (the Department of the Gulf under Banks and the District of Arkansas under Steele). By operating against Shreveport from those two locations, Halleck put Kirby Smith in the position of operating with interior lines against two columns. If both forces were superior to Kirby Smith's forces then this concept might have succeeded. However, Steele's force was very weak and Kirby Smith was able to delay that force using only minimal cavalry in an economy of force role. This allowed Kirby Smith to concentrate his available assets against Banks and so achieve an unlikely victory (given the disparity of forces involved).

Operating along exterior lines assumes also that good communications are available between the converging efforts. This was not the case

between Banks and Steele. Geography alone presented an overwhelming obstacle to timely communication. On top of that challenge, the two forces were not under a single commander. After an initial coordination of objective and timing of movements, there was virtually no contact between Steele and Banks. This allowed Kirby Smith to concentrate first against one and then against the other in an extremely efficient use of very limited assets.

Granted, then, that the operation was poorly conceived and yielded the advantage of interior lines to the Confederacy. The Union still had overwhelming superior land force backed by a Naval force which had enormous firepower. The Union still failed because its commanders violated almost every critical principle of war.

The U.S. Army today recognizes nine principles of war: objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity.²⁴ Almost all lessons of war can be categorized under one or more of these principles. Halleck and Banks disregarded or were ignorant of at least seven of these principles as demonstrated by their actions in the Red River Operation of 1864. It is instructive to examine each of those principles in the context of the Red River Operation of 1864.

UNITY OF COMMAND. Halleck failed at the outset to designate one commander for the operation and place all the resources under his control. This left Banks very tentative in his planning and coordination. It also gave his subordinate commanders the impression that he was not in control, a fatal flaw. The Confederacy, on the other hand, had no such problems. The entire Trans-Mississippi area was under the command of LTG Kirby Smith and sub-ordinate to him were MG Richard Taylor and MG Sterling Price.

²⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, Operations, FM 100-5, (Washington: 1993), p.2-4.

There was never a question on who was in command although Smith and Taylor quarreled bitterly over strategy and tactics.

OBJECTIVE. Halleck failed to clearly identify the objective for the operation. Although the ultimate tactical objective evolved to be Shreveport, this was never clearly tied to the purpose of the operation. Historians are still trying to determine Halleck's purpose in advancing up the Red River. A clearly spelled out objective might have served to focus the intensity and movement of the Union forces. Kirby Smith, too, suffered from a failure to determine his objective until it was almost too late. Only Richard Taylor's aggressiveness kept Smith from frittering away the opportunity for a victory.

MASS. Banks repeatedly violated this principle of war by failing to synchronize the use of all his combat power. He abandoned entirely the firepower of the fleet by moving inland, from the river, towards Mansfield. At Mansfield, he failed to deploy his forces and use his superior mass against Taylor's inferior force. Kirby Smith, on the other hand, used his advantage of interior lines to mass against first one then the other of his opponents. Richard Taylor, in a similar, manner used every soldier at his disposal and massed them with considerable skill against the weakest portions of the Union lines at both Madison and Pleasant Hill. So, despite being numerically inferior to the Union forces, he was able to achieve superiority in combat power at the decisive point.

SECURITY. Banks allowed Taylor to catch him deployed in a long unwieldy column with transports well to the front even though there were sufficient indications that Taylor was preparing to fight a major engagement. Taylor and Price in Arkansas used their cavalry decisively to gain information and screen their own movements. This allowed Taylor especially, to conceal his true strength and intentions from Banks.

OFFENSIVE. Banks, even though on an offensive operation, failed to hold the tactical initiative. AT Mansfield and again at Pleasant Hill, Banks allowed Taylor to dictate the pace and time of the attacks. Thanks to numerical superiority and luck, Banks was able to sustain the furious assaults of the Confederate forces at Pleasant Hill and avoid defeat. It should not have been that close. Banks outnumbered Taylor by close to a 3 to 1 margin. Maintaining a constant offensive pressure on Taylor would have insured an easy victory. By surrendering the tactical initiative and not trying to regain it, Banks gave all the advantages to Taylor.

SURPRISE. Banks never achieved surprise. Nor did he ever attempt to achieve surprise. On the contrary, the Confederate forces knew exactly the nature and composition of Banks forces and his objective. This allowed them to chose when and where to fight to their maximum advantage. The Confederate forces achieved surprise both operationally and tactically again and again. Operationally, Kirby Smith was able to mass almost the entire strength of his division against Banks without allowing the other Union Commander, MG Steele, to know he was only moving against a light holding force. Tactically, Taylor struck Banks at a time and place he did not anticipate.

SIMPLICITY. Banks' orders at both Mansfield and Pleasant Hill lacked clarity and simplicity. As a consequence, his troop dispositions were faulty and invited the devastating attacks which Taylor was only to happy to give to him. Taylor's orders to his subordinates were both brief and concise allowing maximum concentration of combat power in minimum time. But all of the principles Banks violated none was greater than his failure to 'know his enemy'. Time and again, Banks assumptions on Taylor's intentions and capabilities were seriously flawed. Absolutely no attempt was made to validate these assumptions or determine what the enemy might

try to do to counter the Union's offensive. Banks acted as if the Confederacy would follow his script without protest or thought. Taylor refused to be scripted and won a notable but barren victory.

CONCLUSION

The Red River Operation was not a decisive operation for either the Union or the Confederacy. Neither side losing or winning could effect the ultimate outcome of the war. Yet the study of the operation gives a wealth of lessons learned to students of the military art. Halleck failed Banks from an operational stand point. He neither articulated the purpose or objective of the operation clearly nor did he establish a clear chain of command. Banks failed in many areas. Perhaps the best way to sum up his errors is to say that he was not learned in the military art nor did he seem to be interested in learning. Rudimentary knowledge of even some of the principles of war (many of which are almost intuitive) would probably have prevented the defeat. Ultimately, it took a combination of poor operational considerations and ignorance of the principles of war to bring an overwhelmingly numerically superior Union force to defeat in Louisiana.

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